

The SKELETON FINGER

by Headon Hall



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BEGIN HERE TODAY
 SIR DUDLEY GLENISTER, believed to be the murderer of George Glenister in order to obtain his title and estate, is rendered unconscious in a fire where he intended to burn to death—
 NORMAN SLATER, sweetheart of Kathleen Glenister, while—
 JAMES WRAGGE, Scotland detective, has fastened the blame upon Stephen Colne, former cabinet minister.

that I died in the hope of saving life."
 Then, before anyone could stay him, he darted into the fiery chaos that was raging in the mill.
 Half a minute later Inspector Wragge arrived hot on the trail of the fugitive, to find himself the center of much incoherence. Kathleen, Norman and Alf knew him well, Norman and Alf from their eagerly proffered information he managed to gather the main threads into his capable hands. The eminent man whom he had just arrested for the murder of

George Glenister preferred death by fire to death by a hempen rope.
 Wragge turned to the groups around him on the bank of the mill-race. Fabian Womersley and his crowd were staring like a pack of fools in the background, except the camera man, who, as the most intelligent of the lot, had gone for the doctor. John Grimes was stooping over the inanimate form of Sir Dudley. Kathleen and Alf were standing at the detective's elbow, gazing into the inferno into which Mr. Colne had disappeared.
 "Hi, you, Grimes," said the inspector shortly, "I want a magistrate—to take your daughter's depositions. Where is the nearest?"
 The keeper replied that the doctor, who had already been sent for, was a magistrate. There was no other who could be more quickly got at.
 "Good," said Wragge, and he walked over and took a close view for what he was, and then told him knowledge of first that Sir Dudley had been severely manhandled as well as badly burned. Kathleen had followed, and tapped the inspector on the shoulder.
 "Don't lose sight of him," she pleaded. "He has tried to murder Captain Slater and myself, which is clear proof that he killed my brother. You see that I was right all along, don't you?"
 A gleam of human sympathy, tinged with unwonted humor, flashed in Wragge's cold eyes.
 "That will be all right, miss," he said soothingly. "The poor beggar can't run away. It will be time enough to sort out the sheep from the goats in this business when we have all calmed down a bit. We shall have to compare notes, though I am sure that yours and the captain's have been the most trying experience of all."
 Norman objected to the tone of the remark.
 "Trying experience!" he exclaimed. "He has kept us prisoners, myself in chains, and then did his best to burn us alive. You are never going to whitewash the scoundrel, Wragge? To be candid, I have mistrusted your handling of this case from the first. You have never really treated him as George Glenister's murderer."
 "You wait a little, sir," Wragge strove against the rising storm. "Miss Glenister's very natural desire for justice will be fully met, I pledge you my word. Have a little forbearance. You must see how I am pressed."
 Whether the young people saw it or not is a moot point never to

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MUST HAVE BEEN GOOD JOKE



Helen Keller is here shown reading the lips of Mrs. Calvin Coolidge by the touch system. She is blind and deaf.

he decided. For at that moment the arrival of Hinkley, accompanied by the village constable and half a dozen farm laborers, caused a diversion. The old butler's joy at finding his beloved former mistress safe and sound was unbounded, and his concern at Sir Dudley's plight, as involving the honor of the family, was no less sincere. Mutual explanations had hardly been exchanged when the advent of the doctor relieved Wragge of his principal anxiety. Sir Dudley, having been placed on a hurdle and dispatched to the Grange in charge of Hinkley, the detective took the doctor aside.
 "There is another patient for you in the keeper's cottage, sir, but you are also needed in your magis-

try will pass off in a day or two with proper attention."
 After giving instructions to the parents the doctor took Wragge by the arm and together they left the cottage.
 "Poor Sally Grimes!" said Doctor Wheatley as they struck out for the Grange. "She seems to have got herself mixed up in a queer coil which I do not profess to understand."
 "More sinned against than sinning, perhaps," Wragge half admitted. "She was here tonight with that film gang by chance, and she had nothing to do with Sir Dudley Glenister's attempt to kill his cousin and her lover by setting fire to the mill."
 Doctor Wheatley whistled. "I suppose that means," he said, "that Glenister murdered Miss Kathleen's brother—that the rumour about him were true? I never liked the fellow, in common with most of his neighbors."
 "No, doctor," was the reply. "The case is a bit more complex than that. It wasn't the present baronet who killed George Glenister, and I very much doubt if the name of George Glenister's murderer will ever be given to the world. I promise you, however, that you shall know it within an hour or two. I expect," Wragge added with a chuckle, "that I shall have to enlighten Miss Kathleen Glenister before she goes to bed if I am not to have my ears boxed, and there is no reason why you should not be present. You medical gentlemen can always be trusted to keep a secret."
 On reaching the Grange they were received by Hinkley with the news that Sir Dudley had been carried up to his bedroom and that he had not regained consciousness. The doctor at once went up to him, and Wragge was shown into the dining room, where Kathleen and Norman were partaking of a belated meal. Alf Grimstead was also seated at table, having been invited to join them so that he might recount his adventures. For some inscrutable feminine reason it pleased Kathleen to be gracious to Wragge.
 "Sit down, Inspector, and have some supper," she said gayly. "Though in the first instance we owe our lives to this brave fellow, your presence at the finish shows that you were following the right clue. I should be interested to learn how you got hold of it."
 Wragge sat down and unfolded his napkin. "The clue, miss?" he said. "Oh, I see what you mean—the clue to you and Captain Slater being at the mill."
 "Well, that's the same thing as the clue to my brother's murderer," declared Kathleen with a touch of her old asperity.
 (To Be Continued)



"Sit down, Inspector, and have some supper," she said gayly.
 "What's the beans—the skeleton finger case?" asked the genial practitioner absently.
 Wragge nodded and turned to ascertain the intentions of the baronet's recent victims. Kathleen, hatless and disheveled, was equal to the occasion.
 "Hinkley will give us beds at the Grange," she replied. "And Captain Slater's servant to whom we owe our lives, will come too. I warn you, Inspector Wragge, that you will not get rid of me till my cousin is dead or in custody—yours or that of some more willing officer."
 Wragge saluted with profound respect.
 "I shall come up to the Grange with the doctor the moment we have finished here, miss," he said. "We have to see an accident case at the keeper's house, but we shall not be long."
 Mr. Fabian Womersley had marshaled his company and was already leading them across the dam to pick up their apparatus and make their way back to the cars. The director of the Amphibians in after life found a sad delight in being his companions at his favorite haunts with the story of what he missed by not keeping the camera man at work after "little Maude's" smash-up on the mill wheel.
 Leaving the ill-omened mill to burn itself out, Wragge and the doctor and Grimes walked across the clearing to the cottage. They were met on the threshold by Judith Grimes, gibbering like a frightened ape.
 "We were all wrong, John," she moaned. "It wasn't George as ruined her, nor Sir Dudley as killed George. She's told me all about it."
 They brushed the evil old woman aside and entered the room where "the pet of the pictures," as she was fond of calling herself, still reclined upon the horsehair couch. But she had recovered from her first collapse. Her eyes were shining with some of their old careless impudence.
 "Cheer-oh, dad!" she cried on recognizing her father. "Cheer-oh, Mr. 'Fec!' And cheer-oh, Doctor Wheatley! You remember me as a kiddy, don't you, doctor? You never thought you were vaccinating a cinema star when you pricked my poor little arm, did you?"
 The doctor made his examination and rose from it smiling.
 "No need for any depositions here," he said. "There are no bones broken. Nothing but a few bruises and a severe shock, which

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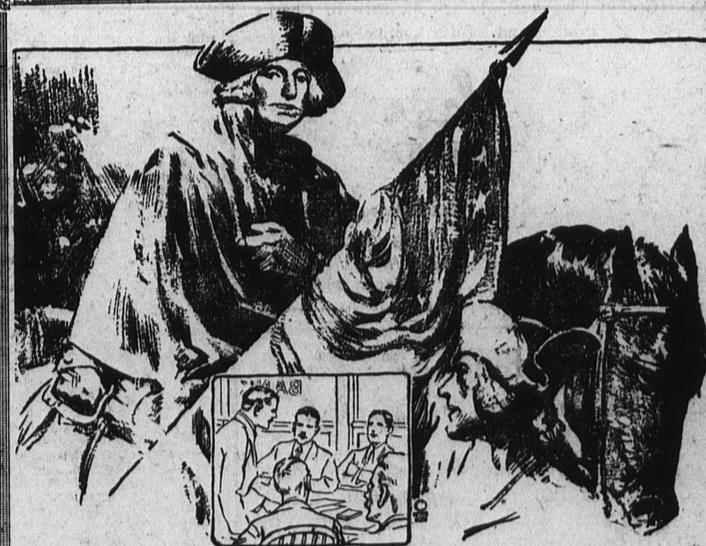
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